

ION: WORLD TRADE CENTER EXPLOSION

Garage videotape is missing

Authorities cite threats before blast

By Bruce Frankel
USA TODAY

NEW YORK — Investigators Tuesday said they are puzzled over the disappearance of a videotape that may have recorded vehicles in the World Trade Center garage before it exploded Friday.

And authorities revealed the U.S. Embassy in Algeria received two threats from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine that it would blow up a building in New York late January.

Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly said authorities believed the threat had passed when the second deadline — Jan. 26, requiring Israel to allow 400 expelled Palestinians to return — passed uneventfully. Meanwhile, New York City said the Port Authority offered a \$200,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for the bombing.

Authorities cautioned against asking too much of the missing videotape: "You could call it pe-



ANOTHER SCARE: A port authority employee tells workers at a reopened part of the World Trade Center complex Tuesday to leave after a bomb threat. Workers later returned to the complex.

By Robert Deutsch, USA TODAY

culiar," said James Fox, head of the FBI's bureau in New York. "Incredible, isn't it?"

Videotapes were recovered on Monday for the period from Wednesday morning to Thursday morning, and from Friday morning to Saturday morning.

Missing: a sequence videotape for the period from Thursday at 8 a.m. to Friday at 8 a.m., of the B-2 garage level — the "seat" of the massive explosion.

A Port Authority employee has told investigators he may have misplaced it, Fox said. It may still be buried.

Two garage videotapes already reviewed were of marginal quality, though subject to enhancement, Fox said.

Asked what he would tell the employee, Fox said, "Let's try to find it! ... Now!"

While acknowledging pieces

had been recovered, authorities said there is "no reason to raise speculation" that a brown van with a stripe may have held the bomb, as reported on CNN.

Investigators say they are looking at several terrorist groups, including the extremist Hamas which is opposed to Middle East peace talks.

The investigation is spreading as license plates are tracked

Hampshire and elsewhere.

Seeking to dampen expectations of a quick resolution, Fox said, "No new dramatic witness is going to solve this case for us."

Also on Tuesday:

► Investigators pulled about 10 cars from the garage and began vacuuming them inside and outside and scraping their undercarriages. If nothing pertinent is found, the cars will be returned to their owners.

► Bomb experts said the explosion took place on the B-2 level below the Vista Hotel in the public parking area.

► The New York City Comptroller's office estimated the bombing could cost about \$700 million in lost business during the first week after the blast.

► For the second day in a row, a retaining wall collapsed near the crater — described as 200 feet in diameter, extending through seven stories. The columns previously were supported by the horizontal flooring.

"It is in a dangerous position now," said Walter Boser, head of the police bomb squad.

► A part of the complex that had reopened was evacuated because of a bomb threat. For 50 minutes, authorities searched the train station beneath the center while frightened workers left the area. A suspicious package later was found to contain building materials.